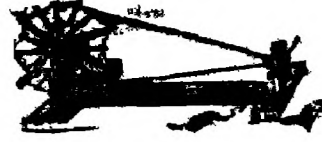




AZAD, ABUL KALAM.  
PRESIDENTIAL  
ADDRESS.  
1923.



# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



## SPECIAL SESSIONS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

HELD AT DELHI IN SEPTEMBER, 1923.



DELIVERED ON SATURDAY, THE 15TH SEPTEMBER

BY

MAULANA ABULKALAM AZAD



(TRANSLATED FROM THE URDU)



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DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

We meet today at a critical and decisive moment of our national struggle—a moment so critical indeed that we have been constrained by force of circumstances to convene a special session of the Congress before the expiry of the year, in order to obtain a solution of and guidance as to the intricate problems confronting us. When I say that the difficulties of the hour, and the task before us are unprecedented in the history of the Congress, then I believe that I am merely voicing the sentiments of every individual in this assembly. It is three years since you came together in a similar and special session at Calcutta. that also was a memorable day in your history. The greatness of that day was even as the greatness of those days when nations issue declarations of war for freedom. But in the importance of today's session is to be found a glimmer of those days in history when nations have had to deal not with declarations of wars but with the intricate and decisive issues arising from such declarations. Then your thoughts were for the commencing struggle, today you strive to protect the conclusion of the war from danger. Then you were anxious to begin your march, today there has arisen the danger of losing your way. Then you were about to launch your boat fearlessly from the shore, today, in the words of the immortal Persian poet Hafiz, "The boat has set sail from one shore, but the other shore is yet far distant and the waves are rising up against the bark from all sides."

Gentlemen, when your choice has fallen upon me to preside at an occasion so momentous in your history, I feel that you have reposed such confidence in me and conferred on me such honour that never can I credit myself with having deserved it. I can only believe that you have been very generous in your good opinion of me. If any poor services of mine had deserved so signal a mark of your confidence in me then I should rest assured that your action is a very gratifying recognition of my humble efforts from my countrymen and my country. I am most profoundly thankful to you for the honour you have done me and it is to you that I turn for help and guidance in this responsibility which is a pledge of your confidence in me. We are undoubtedly face to face at a very difficult time with a very difficult problem but our determination remains unshaken and although we may be in doubt about our methods we are in no doubt about our aims. Our humble efforts are for truth and justice and in this world which is God's Kingdom such strivings must meet with success. Hence, though we may be anxious about the weary length and the perils of the journey, and fully and painfully aware of the difficulties and the obstacles in our path, never should this knowledge make us despan. It should rather assure us that the Divine Providence which guarded us when we were weak and helpless will protect us on our way through all our trials—till success is ours and we have reached the journey's end.

### THE PROBLEMS OF THE TIME.

Gentlemen, I am not unaware of the limitations upon the province of my discussion. However urgent and pressing may be my thoughts, and however numerous the themes I am tempted to discuss, I must guard against trespassing on those fields which should be reserved exclusively for the president of the annual Congress, more particularly when your choice for President of the annual

session has fallen upon so ardent a patriot so able a councillor and so distinguished a leader as is Moulana Mohamed Ali.

Even if I were expected to deal with events and perplexities of the time, for me silence would be preferable to speech. There is nothing in the events of these days which need cause surprise. There was a time when expressions of Indian national sentiments were confined to criticism of bureaucratic injustice. Criticism developed into complaint and complaint into agitation and protest. For long it remained the practice of the Congress to wail over every new instance of bureaucratic wrongdoing. But now we have passed that stage. Firm decision and strenuous work are before us. The phenomena of injustice are now so familiar that they have become part of our every day life. To talk of injustice now would not only be unnecessary but would also suggest that we have hitherto not been utterly and finally convinced as to the existence of injustice ; whereas our certainty has now reached that last stage at which no increase in it is possible. We need not await the rising of a curtain to reveal to us the truth. We are sure that the treatment meted out to us will continue unless our own efforts bring about a change in the present sorry state of affairs. We are not concerned with individuals, whose characters may change, our problems are not temporary and will not be solved by time alone. We are confronted with a system of which we can postulate with certainty that injustice is the law of its nature and which has continued to exist till now not on account of any innate strength of its own but simply because our neglect has provided pillars to strengthen and support it. Injustice is the essence and not an accident of that system. Therefore, our best efforts should be directed against the life of that system.

#### NEW ADMISSION OF OLD TRUTHS.

Nonetheless, I frankly welcome the admission of the truth that comes from our brothers who have hitherto maintained that our programme was founded on despair. Now, at last, many of them are constrained to admit that the Reforms are "mere deceptions", that "Indian self-respect cannot be maintained under present conditions", and that no reliance can be placed on the broken promises of England. They feel that the boycott is our only recourse and that India should firmly non-co-operate with the British Empire Exhibition. Three years' bitter experience of the "Reformed Councils", the Salt Tax, the unfulfilled promise of Indianising the Public Services have taught us nothing new. We do not see any novelty in the injustice of the Kenya decision but simply the repetition of an old and expected wrong originating from national and racial prejudices. When was it that these things did not exist ? Britain has broken her promises, but how many of the famous promises of Britain remain unbroken ? Indian self-respect has been slighted, but does our experience supply us with a single instance in which it has been honoured and respected ? But all these events, and especially the last, have come as startling revelations to those gentlemen who apparently needed such to complete their education and teach them the truth.

Gentlemen, we will not complain that our brothers have been so long in arriving at the truth. We will forget that the truth was as obvious three years before the Kenya decision as after it. For an admission of the truth is praiseworthy whether it come soon or late. Consequently, we welcome this admission by our countrymen and we wish to tell them that our country needs

their services to-day as much as it did three years ago. If we sincerely believe that the time for protecting Indian honour has arrived, why should we not, inspite of petty differences as to method, unite in order to guard it ?

### THE GREAT TURKISH VICTORY

Gentlemen, I am sure the first thing you will expect of me to-day is that I should have the honour of voicing your sentiments of joy at an event which is so curiously, and yet so honourably, connected with your national struggle and marks a glorious epoch of your national history. It was the will of God that two distant nations of the East should be so closely connected in their struggle for justice and freedom that the sufferings of one are a cause of grief to the other and the victory of either is an occasion of rejoicing for both. India while treading the up-hill path that leads to her own freedom has made the Muslim Khilafat and the independence and honour of Turkey one of her national demands ; while the new-born nationalism of Turkey and her overwhelming victories have appeared as a miracle before the world and her courageous and exemplary patriotism has infused a new life into all the nations of the East.

Gentlemen, about nine months ago the Congress congratulated the Turkish nationalists on the success of their armies on the field of battle. But as a matter of fact those victories were merely the fore-runners of a greater victory to come ; for though they were military successes only, yet they came as heralding the moral and political victory which has followed. It is the first instalment of a complete victory substituting a new-born greatness for an ancient grandeur which had seemed to be in the throes of death. It is a proclamation to the world that the community of nations must welcome a new and victorious member. It has been a glorious and successful march which, inspite of the attempts of the greatest Powers of the Earth to place obstacles in its path in their futile opposition, has progressed onwards driven by the overpowering strength of its patriotic fervour. The goal has now been reached and history has begun the first chapter of the story of a conquering nation. The signing of the Turkish Peace Treaty on the 24th of July last marks the beginning of a new epoch of national greatness and the consummation of those victories which are indispensable to the life and honour of a nation. It was a moral victory rather than a victory of the sword. It was a victory of character and intellect, without which all diplomatic and military victories are useless and futile.

### UNIVERSAL CONGRATULATIONS.

Gentlemen, India cannot rejoice too greatly in congratulating the Turks on their marvellous victories, for she sees not so much the events as the mighty moral to which they point. She views in the success of Turkey not only the fulfilment of the Turkish aims but the victory of the whole East. I beg, first of all, to convey the good-wishes of India to His Majesty the Caliph of the Mussalmans. Next, I wish to congratulate the National Assembly of Angora on the victorious advent of their democratic government. And our eyes turn inevitably to that unique personality to whom all these successes are mainly due. I congratulate Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha on behalf of the Indian people.

Gentlemen, I do not fulfil my duty by congratulating India and Turkey only. The field is far more extensive and is not confined to any particular

nation or country. The struggle which for the past five years made the peace of the world impossible, was not merely a war of governments and nations. It was something more. The vigorous statesmanship of Ismet Pasha in opposition to the futile threats of Lord Curzon did not merely represent the struggle of Turkey and Britain or of East and West. It was a war of principles, of opposed and conflicting faiths. On one side was the pride of power denying to all weaker nations the right to exist, on the other side was the determination of justice and truth proclaiming that all nations had a right to exist if they wished to do so. The will of God has decided the issue. Force has failed, in spite of its strength; justice has triumphed in spite of its apparent weakness and temporary set-backs. The success of Turkey is an achievement too great to be interpreted as the victory of Asia or the East. It is the victory of justice, and justice is above all national patriotism and knows no distinctions of East and West. It concerns itself with all mankind. Permit me, therefore, to congratulate the whole of mankind on this victory, and every individual in the East or the West who is a lover of justice and respects the freedom of man.

But although promises have been fulfilled and justice has been done, to make our picture complete, we are bound to say that this has come about not through any generous desire on the part of the Powers to keep their 'promises', but simply because due performance of their pledges was exacted. For when the Powers are compelled to make good their promises at the point of the sword, they are liberal enough to concede even more than they promised. They accede to all the demands of the Conqueror who will yield nothing to satisfy the claims of justice.

Gentlemen, the Turkish Peace is an event from which History will draw many morals. Justice has undoubtedly been done and the deserving have prospered. But what have the Powers, who had sworn to trample justice underfoot, gained by their futile opposition? What has England gained by scattering her broken promises through the world for the last four years, — by supporting tyranny and oppression with a strength of resolution she has never brought to the service of justice? She wished to crush Turkey and Turkey has grown strong in spite of British intrigues and designs. Britain refused to yield to the claims of justice but she has bowed her head before the will of a nation. She often wrote her decisions with the pen, they were torn to pieces with the sword. When posing as supreme arbiter of the fate of nations, she wrote her peace treaties, India cried out against them in the name of truth and justice and she replied to the protest with contempt. But when Mustafa Kemal drew up his demands with the point of the sword, she bowed like a conquered nation and dared not refuse them. We need not await the historian's answer. The world has replied already. England has surrendered everything to Turkey, all she has obtained for herself is ill-fame for an attempt at injustice. The imputation was formerly cast at her back but now she bears the stain of it on her forehead.

#### THE NEW EAST.

We must remember that the significance of great events so obvious to later historians is not visible to contemporary observers. We are passing through an epoch of change which is exactly like those periods of the past to which historians have traced the origin of world-wide revolutions. The world is rapidly altering



its concepts. What till yesterday were considered unassailable truths are now in process of dissolution and the outlines of maps are changing like the world's principles and faiths. The world's heights are reduced to depressions; depressions are elevated to heights. The nadir of success leads to the beginning of decline. The increasing darkness of despair carries us to the coming of the dawn. No-one can foresee what the immediate future will bring, but that what is happening at present will lead to the evolution of a New East is very clear to us. The awakening of the East which for the last quarter of a century was but a bare consciousness, has been galvanised by the sufferings of the Great War which have quickened it with new life and unrest. Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha's wonder-working hand has not only awakened the sleeping life of Turkey but has also knocked so loudly at our Eastern gate that echoes resound across the plains of Central Asia, fill the African desert and ring across the Indian Ocean. Who can say that the reverberations will not arouse every corner of the Eastern World?

Gentlemen, India cannot ignore her natural and geographical connection with the universal struggle of the East, and in making common cause with it she harbours all those emotions of sympathy which the similarity of time, conditions, and aims naturally produce among people of the same regions. She welcomes every Eastern nation that embarks on a struggle for justice and freedom, and regrets the fate of those nations which have been left behind their comrades. She assures the nationalists of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Morocco, and all other eastern countries that the hearts of India's millions are eager for their success and hold their freedom no less dear than the freedom of their own beloved motherland.

### JAZIRAT-UL-ARAB.

In particular, India today reaffirms her old determination to secure the independence of the Jazirat-ul-Arab. This was the most important and unalterable item of the Khilafat demands which the Congress proclaimed in 1920. The demand is important to India not merely because it is part of the religious faith of a large section of her people. If only to advance the cause of her own freedom India cannot afford to ignore it. India, Egypt, and Arabia are so placed by geography and nature that their political fortunes have been linked for ever. The existence of a fettered India is the first link of a chain that binds its neighbours. It was the desire to perpetuate the slavery of India which made it necessary that the Suez Canal should remain in British hands. And now the independence of Arabia is being sacrificed to maintain India's evil plight. For if Arabia, whose freedom has been trampled upon with the help of Indian armies, becomes a new stronghold of British power, then the frontiers of Indian slavery will begin not from the Indian Ocean but from the coast of Syria and the Persian Gulf, — from Mosul and Diar-i-Bakr. India assures the people of Arabia that their independence and freedom from foreign interference is as much an object of her struggle today as it was when she made her proclamation of 1920, and that she will continue her struggle for so long as any portion of the Arabian countries remains in subjugation to a foreign yoke.

### CONSTANTINOPLE AND YERAVADA JAIL

Gentlemen, although we are directing our gaze at the splendid palaces of the Khilafat at Constantinople in tendering our congratulations on the great



Turkish Victory, our thoughts turn involuntarily towards an Indian Jail in whose cell the greatest man in India lies, a convict. I am certain that if outside Turkey any person deserves first to be congratulated on the Turkish Victory then it is that great Generalissimo of India—Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi raised his voice in support of the Turkish cause when even within Turkey no cry of national protest whatever had been heard. It was his perception of fact and insight into reality which at the very first survey enabled him to grasp all the depths and bearings of this problem, and to invite all India to realise that this was not merely a demand of the Mohammedans of India, but of the entire country. Gentlemen, the efforts and endeavours of India under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi in support of the Khilafat demands, form, in fact, an important and special aspect of the present struggle. History will discuss its consequences. Perhaps it is premature that we should try to estimate all the effects of the Khilafat struggle but still there are some effects which we now perceive without survey or discussion, and each of these is so great that alone it was enough to have induced this national struggle. Hindu-Muslim unity, without which the freedom of India is nothing more than a phantasm, has triumphed by reason of the Khilafat struggle over those difficulties which for a long time had beset its path. The international prestige of India in the entire Orient, a prestige which has given India an eminent position amongst the newly-awakened lands of the East, is a consequence of this very struggle. But for it, what would have been the status of India today in all Asia and Africa? It was her armies that had trampled under-foot the freedom of Turkey and Arabia, hence it is obvious that the contempt and reprobation of the entire East would have fallen on her. Wherever a single Indian showed his face the finger of scorn would have been lifted "Lo! There goes a fellow of an unfortunate country! He is not only the cause of his own miserable lot, he is the cause of the sad plight of the free nations of the East!" But today India can lift her head high and say, "The stain wherewith helplessness had sullied my garments, my will and desire have washed away." If it has so happened that without their will and desire thousands of Indians marched to the field of battle to unsheathe their swords against the Turks and Arabs, then of their own wish and desire thousands of Indians marched to jail that justice might be meted out to the Arabs and Turks. Today from every quarter of the East there are choral voices raised to proclaim India's honour and reputation. In Constantinople her name is sounded as though she were the standard-bearer of the freedom of the East. In the bazars of Cairo there is on every tongue the cry, "God grant thee victory, O Gandhi"! This is in truth an honour like that usually accorded only to free nations and which subjugated India has acquired undoubtedly as a result of the Khilafat struggle. And what appears to us even greater than these two effects is that intellectual development which manifests itself in love of Liberty, and which India has acquired as a result of this struggle. For any country that is to become free, the first requisite is that she should prove that she herself does fully appreciate the value of liberty. So when India demanded the freedom of Turkey and Arabia, then simultaneously with this demand she affirmed that she herself could not live deprived of liberty. Subjugated nations have neither desire nor will. If India could express her "will" about Turkey, and could determinedly struggle to secure the fulfilment of that "will" then she has secured freedom for herself because the securing of freedom is really a synonym for the expression of the people's will.

Gentlemen, I desire your permission to say that my personal feeling about whatever I have done during the last four years in connection with the Khilafat demands has always been that action was merely my duty not only as a Mohamedan but also as an Indian. It is my belief that his support of the Khilafat movement in India was the greatest service which that great personality in Indian history, Mahatma Gandhi, has rendered to his country.

### DIFFICULTIES OF THE TIME.

I have referred at the beginning of my address to the difficulties of the time. For the success of any mass-effort unity of action is imperative and disunity is disastrous. At this moment our unity has weakened and therefore danger threatens us. But I must first invite your attention to the difficulties of the moment in order that we may adequately estimate their nature and extent. If our estimate be ever so little beyond the facts or ever so little short of them, it will not be surprising if we fall into fresh danger. We stand today in such a position that negligence is on one side and despair on the other. If we assess these difficulties as being less than they actually are we may fall into negligence and if we take an exaggerated view of our difficulties we are in danger of plunging into despair. We must be neither negligent nor appalled. We must face difficulties and overcome them. But this is only possible when we have quite accurately estimated them. For our purpose, scales and measurements are needed more than aims.

### THE UNIFORMITY OF LAWS OF SOCIAL LIFE

We should at this stage reflect on those natural Laws governing the social life of the world which, though they may be accepted by intellect are often obscured by strong emotions. We are as much the product of the life and the movement on this wonderful globe as are other countless and obscure creatures who are brought into existence by its uniform revolutions and are even now scattered over its bosom. Our world itself is but a small fraction of a universe of which we can find neither the length nor the breadth; but we have discovered that it is uniform in all its changes, and though it displays innumerable forms of life and movement, yet, like the will of their Creator the Law of their existence is one. It is uniform all-embracing, unchanging and unique. What has happened once will continue to happen always. The experiences of one will be repeated by all others; no event really new ever takes place; nothing is really dissimilar to, and distinct from all other things. In the words of Umar Khayyam the philosopher—poet of Persia : "There is but one story of her life which is always repeated under new names and new forms" Or to quote the brief words of the famous French writer Victor Hugo, "The story of the world's events is a continuous repetition."

Just as the poets have mused upon this perfect similarity of the events of the world and the unchanging uniformity of the laws of life, historians have observed and philosophers have drawn their conclusions therefrom. We as political workers should also open our eyes to this truth, for this uniformity of law applies to society just as it applies to individuals. Even as the individuals have bodies and brains and all the powers and qualities which appertain to them,—similarly, societies have bodies, and brains, and psychological states produced by their

combinations. It is inevitable that the same types of mind and the same environments should be similarly affected. Just as the acts of individuals are the result not of their individuality but of their mental and physical conditions, so also the acts of societies are not due to their peculiar individuality but are the results of their mental condition and environment. Societies having the same temperament will react similarly under the same environment. The beginning and the end of nations then rise and fall, their lethargy and energy, their freedom and their subjugation, their successes and their failures are all subject to one law. Exactly what which has happened to one nation will happen to all other nations that come after it. This wonderful uniformity of the laws of social life has been thus expressed by a philosopher-historian of the thirteenth century of the Christian era, Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaladoun, who first formulated the principles of the philosophy of history, 'If we eliminate all references to names and time, the history of one nation will be exactly the history of all other nations at all other times, for men and dates constitute the only difference in the histories of different nations.' The same truth has been expressed by a famous French writer of these days, Dr. Gustave Le Bon, in a more comprehensive and learned form. "When we have discovered and formulated the laws of social psychology in the same way as those of individual psychology, it will become possible for us to write the history of a particular nation and civilization, and use it as the history of every other nation and civilization. It will be permanently useful to us—like a millenium calendar."

### NATIONAL STRUGGLE AND ITS STAGES

Gentlemen, It is absolutely necessary for us today to consider the essential implications of this law of national existence. This, and this alone, can remove unreasonable astonishment and fears. We should remember that what is happening today is neither new nor unusual. It is an old, invariable and unavoidable accompaniment of the ordeal of national endeavour and striving through which India is passing. We are only doing what has been done before. Before us is a spectacle which the lives of past generations have foreshadowed. In adding a new page to the history of nations we have merely provided a fresh illustration of the universality of this law of social life.

It is a well-established fact that nations awaken after periods of decline, and that after their mental and moral conditions have altered, their material state also undergoes a gradual change. To borrow the metaphor of an old German metaphysician, named Heiman, "When individuals are in a state of apathy and indifference the national soul is asleep; at the time of their mental revolution it dreams; when their feelings are roused it stirs till at last it rises and sets out on the path of endeavour." On this road, gentlemen, there are definite stages, and fixed, unalterable rules for the guidance of travellers. Every caravan that travels along this road must pass every single one of these stages. The triumphs awaiting the successful caravan are glorious, but the obstacles before it are innumerable, its victory will be momentous, but the hardships on the way are great and unavoidable. The difficulties facing it are internal as well as external. It has to undergo mental and physical trials and to suffer internal emotions and attacks from without. The path is full of stumbling blocks and pitfalls and the caravan cannot proceed at an even pace. It is forced to halt at times and advance

cautiously It must nerve itself for a fresh effort after every set-back and increase its speed after every halt. This journey is not a consistent progress from triumph to triumph, but ultimately success must attend us. Victory cannot be achieved at every step but it comes at last and is sublime !

Gentlemen, the divine law of existence cannot be suspended for our benefit. Now that we have set out on this journey all its stages lie ahead of us and must be traversed. If our speed has slackened there is nothing unusual or strange about it, and it is time we quickened our pace again. If our march has come to a dead halt we must start afresh. If we have been unable to agree on a particular question, if there has been a rift in our unity, it does not matter in the least. Why should we not re-unite ? This is merely a test to which we have been subjected as have all our predecessors on the path of liberty, and we must come triumphantly through it as other heroic nations have come through it in the past. There is no occasion for fear or despair. The lightning which has stricken us is one of the ordinary accidents of this venture. It has overtaken many before us and will overtake many who will come after us.

### A STAGE OF TRIAL

Let us for a moment examine the real nature of the difficulties before us from the stand-point of the psychology of social action. It is unnecessary to say that as in the case of individuals, the brain is the original fountain-head of the actions of nations. When the mental growth of the individuals of a nation reaches a stage where it can make itself felt externally, it awaits a suitable opportunity. Under favourable circumstances it requires more than anything else a strong incentive that, prevailing over all divergencies and differences of thought and opinion, provides a converging point for all the scattered elements of the people. When the brains of individuals are united into the composite brain of the community, then the element of emotion becomes more operative therein than reason or perception. So this converging centre also is born of sentiment and not of perception. And when such a condition is brought about, active effort makes its appearance, and, in proportion to its energy, it rises and clashes with opposing forces. Then it either succeeds in reaching a definite limit or in obedience to natural laws it suffers repeated interruptions. These also have their various aspects and are governed by different rules. But in every condition it is imperative that at some stage or the other the law of reaction should have effect. Then all of a sudden, symptoms of depression and despondency supervene, and their greatest effect is on equanimity of thought. It is as though innumerable pages were bound together in a binder which has become loose or unfastened. New differences arise, disintegration supervenes and there comes a time of great trial for national effort. Since, like all conditions of society, this condition is also natural, knowledge and perception can influence it in only a small degree. Howsoever judiciously minded and well-acquainted with past experiences of the world the individuals of a nation or a community may be, they cannot stifle their natural sentiments, or eliminate conditions and effects arising from them. But, if the brain and heart of effort be sound and unaffected then everything that happens is a mere minor ailment of the body. The life of effort is safe from danger. Often there arises the phase of arrested activity and sometimes this assumes the aspects of a dangerous suspension of life. But, as soon as that period passes which was necessary to allow the after-effects of this disorder to wear off, then immediately

this temporary seeming-depression is dispelled and effort manifests itself in all its original energy and fervour. Or rather, in many cases effort becomes stronger and more sustained than before, because this temporary suspension was merely peripheral. The inner forces had remained continually at work. Now in its later manifestations there is an addition to effort of newer forces to those previously existing.

Like all the changes and alterations of this world, the actions of communities either languish or persist. They are not always born afresh, there are rises and falls. We make a mistake in interpreting a fall as a cessation, and a rise as a new birth. We would be in error in regarding the suspension of any national activity as a cessation of activity—an error similar to that of concluding that the tides of the ocean will not rise tomorrow because they have ebbed to-day.

Thus, our national struggle has suffered suspension after activity. The struggle was proceeding at a rapid pace, when suddenly the Bardoli decision signalled a halt. In obedience, we paused abruptly, and it was only natural that the sudden pause should produce a shock. From this shock all those effects ensued which are the natural results of suspended activities. It is an effect of that shock that our organisation has been shaken. It appears that the goods which were packed and fastened are being rapidly unpacked and unfastened. The general inactivity of the movement, the split in the Congress, the rupture in Hindu-Muslim unity, the failure of all attempts to bring about a union—all these are natural results of the shock our movement has received.

Gentlemen, this is a stern trial from which we must emerge triumphantly nerved by our determination to secure victory, and we should not be surprised if we have to strive very hard indeed for success. But nonetheless, I hope that you will not take incidents to heart more bitterly than the case warrants. To one who understands the psychology of nations and is a student of history this condition appears exactly like that of a man who has paused for a breathing space while running a long race.

We should not object if our opponents and critics prefer to be deceived by our present condition for they are in such a mental state that they will recognise power only when it is brought face to face with them. But we should have no doubts as to the real strength of our position. What is it that we have lost? All the intellectual springs of our efforts are still strong and its foundations are still unshaken. Why should we be despondent about lassitude affecting our limbs when there is no slackening of vigour in the beating of our hearts? Can we doubt the evidence of our senses? Do we not feel that there is a faith engraved on our hearts and ever present as an ideal before our eyes, infusing with its spirit every vein and artery of our body?

Gentlemen, Permit me today to make an announcement on your behalf which will be a real interpretation of your convictions. I assert with the greatest confidence that our struggle continues as before. We are in a state of suspended animation which has delayed our arriving at a definite decision, but which has not stopped the struggle. Problems concerning intelligence, enthusiasm, and effort have arisen, but we emphatically deny that there can be any question of our relinquishing the struggle or even of temporary despair.

But while I have drawn your attention to the fact that there is no cause



for despair, I must tell you that there is also no excuse for slackening our efforts. We should not forget the experiences of every day life that, however trifling an indisposition may be it can be rendered fatal through neglect. The trial before us today is a temporary slackening of our activities provided we do not let our ailment grow into anything serious. How can we guard against this? What is the solution of the problems of the time? The answer is known to every one of us but it is difficult to act accordingly. Unity is all we need and it is in order to establish it that we have gathered here today.

This memorable day should provide us with a welcome opportunity of passing through the present trial. We have invited the world to watch our trial and its consequences. Will we use our opportunities correctly and well? A few hours will provide an answer.

### NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION

We must base our discussion on elementary principles, and we have already adopted the principle of Non-violent Non-co-operation for the achievement of our objects. Non-co-operation is based on that simple but universal faith of the world that we should not co-operate with evil lest it should increase, and therefore it is our duty to leave it alone. It is a truth preached in common by all the religions and moral philosophies of the world. And if in this definition the word "injury" be substituted for the word "evil" (and in my opinion the two are synonymous) then we find non co-operation to be not only be a universal belief of mankind but a natural tendency in the animal world. The preachings of all religions ring in our ears. Islam has made 'Tark-i-Mawalat' (Non-co-operation) compulsory upon its followers, with the intention that they should not support or strengthen those individuals or bodies whose activities are injurious to their nation. The same doctrine is found in other countries also. Similarly in the sphere of national effort, there is not only a common belief in the principle of Non-co-operation but Non-co-operation has even been adopted as the universal principle of action, for it is very obvious that no community or nation in the world can win its rights through co-operation. All nations have won freedom through their own efforts, and effort implies opposition and struggle—not co-operation. The boycott and passive resistance, the greatest weapons of a Non-co-operator, are not the fruit of new doctrines.

Wherever weak individuals and communities have been unable to offer armed resistance to tyranny they have adopted this method as the only means of attaining their object. 'Suffer everything, but never turn your face away from what you consider to be right.' This has been for ages the common advice of religion, morality and nationalism in this world. It can truly be said that in the weak and helpless beginnings of every religion, these principles are its only support and strength. We see it engraved upon the cross of Jerusalem. The streets of Mecca have heard its grand appeal. The first two centuries in the history of the Christian faith were a romance of this principle. When in the time of the Roman Emperor, Severus, the weak foundations of the Christian Church were being shaken by the storms of tyranny and injustice, it was the unconquerable spirit of this principle that maintained the structure intact. A Christian martyr of that period, Tertulian, read a statement before the Roman judges which has been preserved, and which you now read in the famous American writer, Draper's *Conflict*

*between Religion and Science*, "Our community has not been existing for long, but is there a place where we are not found? Cities, islands, provinces, forts, the barracks of the armies, the court of the Empire, the chamber of the Senate—we are always found in the great places of your government. We have left you nothing in your province except your places of worship. Think over it. We can raise a storm of civil war if we so desire, but our religion teaches us that it is better to be killed than to kill. Consequently, we suffer and do not strive." What more perfect and more effective expression to passive resistance can there be? And today after seventeen hundred years we can act precisely on the words of that Christian martyr.

### COUNT LEO TOLSTOY

Probably the first man, who in modern times has preached passive resistance as a weapon to obtain political rights and to oppose the injustice of government as a substitute for armed revolution, was the great and truly Christian teacher of Russia, Count Leo Tolstoy. He has brought it into prominence in his world-famous teaching. The intellect of that great teacher made a vehement protest against the soulless materialism of Western civilization, the intolerable inequality of social conditions, the ruthless oppressions by capitalism, and the tyranny of the Orthodox Russian Church. It is owing to this extremist tendency in Tolstoy, that an ex-president of America remarked concerning his revolutionary theories in the *American Outlook* that "they have without hesitation, passed the bounds of moderation and practicability." But, in all the teachings of Tolstoy, passive resistance is a doctrine the simplicity and practicability of which is obvious, and beyond doubt shows the world the easiest way to its aspirations.

The essential spirit of Tolstoy's teaching is that war and murder must be brought to an end and justice and human rights need not and should not be opposed with arms, for their power is based on the institutions which they have spread broadcast, and if people will merely refrain from helping them to prosper by taking no part in these institutions, they will not be able to survive for a moment.

### MAHATMA GANDHI

The world has always needed practical guidance more than theoretical preaching. The truth is not new to the world, but that which gives truth new greatness and success is the recognition of truth and pursuit of it. Everyone knows that it is our duty to fight for freedom. But though Tolstoy first gave form to the practice of Non-co-operation, nevertheless, his work waited practical exposition at the hands of another personality—so great a personality that he seems to have been selected by Providence for his task. This was Mahatma Gandhi. Even before Tolstoy had preached, the world knew of the truth of the Non-co-operation movement but before Mahatma Gandhi's advent it did not understand how soul-force could be employed in actual practice.

### THE PROGRAMME OF NON-CO-OPERATION.

The method of Non-co-operation which India has adopted under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, although in its first principles the same as the world has seen before, has changed in several respects. At first it was an ethical course, now it is a political programme. As presented by Tolstoy the beliefs and principles



were so extremely comprehensive that, on the one hand, they clashed with the existing thoughts and beliefs of men and with many of their rules of conduct, and on the other, they were faced by extreme practical difficulties. But the present form of Non-co-operation has acquired a complete definiteness. There is nothing in it now which conflicts with religious or political beliefs—nothing of any such complexity that it cannot be brought into operation within a very short time. Non-violence is really the soul of Non-co-operation but if non-violence be not accepted as an article of faith it is enough if it be accepted as expedient and politic. To sever all those connections which bind the bureaucratic power to the people of India is the central belief of Non-co-operation but it has greatly limited its sphere of activities. It desires to be so operative that however rigorous its application may be, it occasions the least possible suffering to those who use it as a weapon.

Self-sacrifice, self-restraint and the strength of our moral spirit are the weapons prescribed for use in this battle. But the movement allows us full latitude, and except from a select body of men who can be an example to the country, it does not demand from the mass of the people anything that is very difficult. It can be asserted with the utmost confidence that for all people struggling for their rights it has become a principle of political action which is extremely simple and therefore practical. It assures a bloodless victory to all the nations of the world, and keeps in view not only the truth of principles but also the difficulties of action.

### FORMULATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Gentlemen, many differences have arisen amongst us concerning certain items of the Non-co-operation programme. These really concern only parts of the method of work but they have led to arguments, and discussions from which as is usual new questions have cropped up. The first of these questions to come before us is the nature of our programme. This programme when it was once put into practice produced its natural consequences. But it has not led us to the conclusion of the struggle and all its battles have yet to be fought. Now, what is the nature of this programme? Is it a programme capable of being put into practice once only, so that if it fails we must find another? Or is it like the unchanging and eternal truths of morality and religion which must be preached for an indefinite period since their object will be achieved only when the country or the greater part of the country has accepted them? My answer to both the above questions is in the negative. The programme was not merely a temporary makeshift for a momentary occasion nor is it anything eternal or unchanging. Both positions are extreme and the truth lies between them. The programme has the strength of religion and the flexibility of the principle of political action. It takes into consideration exigencies of both necessity and duty.

But in order to come to a clear understanding it is necessary for us to recall how the programme originated. In this connection I wish to place before you my views, which have not changed in the least since the beginning of the Non-co-operation movement. The Non-co-operation programme was fully formulated before it was accepted by the special session of the Congress at Calcutta. From that time down to the present day I have never for a moment imagined that the Non-co-operation programme stood for either of the extreme positions I have mentioned above.

## NATURE OF THE PROGRAMME.

The fundamental principle of this programme is this, that we should obtain by our unarmed and non-violent struggle such a victory against the present armed bureaucracy of India that it be compelled to lay down its arms before the will of the Indian people. We have interpreted the will of India as expressing itself in the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj demands. But our aims are not comprised in many words, they are expressed in one brief sentence. As with any other country so with India the question that awaits a decision is only this, "Should the will of the people prevail, or only such rule as has been established by armed force" ?

How will our unarmed struggle be put into practice ? For a reply to this question our programme undoubtedly invites us to action which is not inspired by mere necessity or expediency but rather by firm conviction. It tells us that we must hold aloof from co-operation with the present system of government for this reason that we should not side with a power for evil and for this additional reason that by non-co-operating with it we can so weaken it that it will become incapable of opposing us. This programme comprises both duty and necessity—that is the unanimous verdict of religion, ethics, experience, and history. We should not become an instrument of the injustice meted out to us—and who can controvert this ? It is the decisive evidence of experience and history that no nation in the world has won freedom by co-operating with an alien power ; nor has any nation been granted its freedom as a free gift since such would be opposed to the very nature of power—as none will deny.

If our withdrawal from active co-operation be brought about simultaneously and unanimously then no thinking mind can doubt that the history of India can be changed between the rising and setting of a single sun. But how can this be brought about ? All our difficulties lie in this simple question. In this war, which is not a war, the answer to the question must be our first concern.

I will not enumerate in detail the difficulties before us. I need only mention that out of regard for these difficulties our movement has adopted a principle of action which solves them altogether. It is not deemed at all necessary for success that our movement should wait for a time when all the co-operators in the country will have become non-co-operators or till an overwhelming majority are prepared to act according to the programme of Non-co-operation. For the purposes of our movement, action by a certain limited number of persons is sufficient. If that number is forthcoming the individuals forming it will wish to be joined by the rest but they will not wait for them. The Non-co-operation movement has divided its work into two natural compartments. The first is the collection of the material of war and the second is the prosecution of the war itself. By the material of warfare we mean men inspired with the spirit of passive resistance. The war is a conflict between our passive strength and bureaucratic power and it must come sooner or later to a decisive issue. To secure its first object, the movement has appealed to those in the councils, educational institutions and courts of the government to non-co-operate, because it believes that in these centres of co-operation are to be found men who make the best warriors for the maintenance of the bureaucratic ascendancy as also as for the prosecution of the national struggle. That is, Non-co-operation invites their aid with the two-fold object of depriving the enemy

of his finest troops and of providing itself with the best fighting material. When in response to this appeal a number of men have been collected the first army of Non-co-operation is in the field. This army will be the chief and central actors in the struggle, and the future hopes of the movement will rest not on the country but on the army. On the one hand, this first army will embark on the campaign without delay, and, on the other, it will absorb into it, from time to time, new forces by the magnetism of its call and its practical example.

To accomplish its final purpose, it has adopted the programme of Civil Disobedience. This is its real battle and on this depends the determining of the issue. This course of action has rendered unimportant the question whether the whole of the country will be able to act up to the programme of Non-co-operation within a definite period of time. It has also obviated the question which will arise (if in compliance with its appeal large numbers quit the Government educational institutions and law courts) as to whether we will be able to hold the people together firmly throughout the course of the campaign. It will have little effect on the movement if the whole country cannot support it. The numbers of its supporters do not matter. Failure to support it will occasion regret to the movement but not despair. Doubtless it appeals to the sense of duty and convictions of all people, but as the programme of the struggle, it does not stand in need of uniform or complete support. It is not blind to the fact that the actions of communities are not governed by logic and reason. It realises that mass action is rather the creature of sentiments and emotions. Either the community progresses rapidly or it is motionless. It very rarely moves at a uniform speed. The alternation of ebb and flow is, therefore, inevitable. When a certain atmosphere has been created the merest sign will draw thousands to the post of action. But when the atmosphere changes, not even repeated invitations will stir a single individual. How can such an atmosphere be generated? It can come only through a struggle—in this case the struggle is Civil Disobedience. If therefore the movement is at all anxious about anything, its apprehensions are only for its first army. The victory of the movement or its defeat on the field of battle depends entirely on the moral success or failure of its army. It requires that this pioneering army, however small in numbers, should possess not quantitative but qualitative strength. It should convert itself into a living example of the Non-co-operation creed—immovable as a mountain, resistless as the sea. It should persevere in sacrifices and defeat the lethargy and indifference of the country by the powerful force of its magnetism and attractiveness. It believes that if such a force is established in the country and it perseveres in the struggle, there will soon be many occasions for conflict and trials of strength. Such is the law of such a struggle. And once the atmosphere necessary for such a campaign is created people will hasten to join it of their own accord and there will be no dearth of recruits.

If the movement does not succeed in its purpose at the first attempt it does not matter in the least. That soldiers have been wounded will not dishearten it. It will persevere in its task and spend the intervening period of time in such a way as to create as early as possible the atmosphere needed for the next attack. When the necessary atmosphere have been worked up, it will again be found braving the dangers of the struggle.

Doubtless its programme in itself seems to attain its objects within a definite period. It does not prescribe sustained effort. That is why its leaders had thought that the results of the first attempt would mature within a year.

I believe that the question raised by the present discussion is settled *ipso facto* by this explanation of the order and course of action. Both aspects of the question are really irrelevant to the issue. This was not a programme to be acted upon once and then discarded; nor is it right that we should continue preaching it as a moral principle irrespective of results and circumstances. One half of it is not warfare really but a demand for the soldiers for warfare. Its plan of campaign stands us in good stead again and again as we engage in fresh conflicts. The second part of the struggle depends upon the securing of a suitable field of action and it may not be very conclusive at the first skirmish.

### THE NON-CO-OPERATION MENTALITY.

From the above it is clear how irrelevant are the misunderstandings studiously propagated about the mentality of the Non-co-operation movement. It has been alleged that it is a challenge to western civilization and science, that it preaches instead of politics a new code of morals and a new religion and that advocating a complete divorce from worldly activities it stands for retrogression rather than progress. I assert emphatically that this is an interpretation of our ideas to which we do not give countenance. Non-co-operation has nothing to do directly with educational, social or civic questions. Without doubt, there are in India various schools of thought about the good and bad elements in Western culture and civilization. In fact even the mental tranquility of Europe and America has been disturbed and new principles and ideas are inundating the human mind. Of course, Gandhi, like Tolstoy, has his own ideas about the question but the Non-co-operation movement has no views beyond its single aim. It teaches no new religious creed to its followers nor does it raise up a new edifice of prayer and renunciation. It is in all its bearings, a political programme based on facts and truths. That is why religion, morality and history all recognise it equally and give it their own names. If it preaches a boycott of schools and law courts, it does so, not because it is opposed to European sciences and legal practice but because it is antagonistic to the power under which Indians have to work in these institutions and remain useful tools of the bureaucracy. If it insists on the use of Khaddar it does so not because it has set itself against costly dress or any particular style but because it prefers home-made cloth to foreign—also because it believes that the country requires for its political salvation and freedom the adoption of simple, social habits and the spirit of rigorous self-discipline.

### FIRST EXPERIMENTS

Let us now consider our present condition. In accordance with the first part of our programme, we issued a call to the people; they flocked to our standard and a first group of workers was formed. As provided for by the movement itself, circumstances then brought about an atmosphere of tension and the contest began. This happened in December 1921. Now this is a very important question not only for us but for the whole world—How far did our programme work out successfully?

What is the true criterion of success? We are judging two distinct things. The same criterion cannot apply to both. There is first, the programme of Non-co-operation; then, there is the effort we expended on its realization. If we could not gain our ultimate ends at a first attempt surely it is not just to lay the responsibility for the failure at the door of the programme. As a

practical programme its success consists in demonstrating by experience its practicability, effectiveness and fruitfulness. If such evidence is procurable, nought remains needed to show its success. Our own success, of course, hangs in the balance still. As to the success of our endeavours, I refuse to believe that the attainment of the ultimate goal is its criterion. To gain the end in view is not merely a success but final and complete victory and it is necessary to achieve several successes before we win a final victory. It remains for us therefore to see if we have achieved any of these preliminary successes.

### THE SUCCESSES OF THE EXPERIMENT.

Gentlemen, I venture to assert that to my mind the programme has not only succeeded, but succeeded to the greatest extent possible of such a programme. If three years before, it was a principle the success for which could be demonstrated by logical reasoning, it is today a tried belief for whose effectiveness observation and experience stand witness.

Conjure up for a minute all the difficulties and obstacles lying in its way; consider also the short time allowed to it for progress through the three stages of theoretical exposition, training and practice; do not forget that it was the first practical step the country took towards freedom—then you will see what wonderful results have been arrived at. How is it possible for us to think of failure? Which one of the items of Non-co-operation has proved practicable and which one of its practices are manifestly ineffective? Did not numerous people quit the Government institutions? Did they not renounce all those worldly advantages and comforts which they enjoyed? Did not sentiments of self-sacrifice sweep the whole of the country? Did not thousands of people willingly betake themselves to the gaols? Did not the entire military organization of the Government failed to open the door of a single shop on the occasion of the *hartal* consequent upon the Prince's visit? Does not every morning and every evening of the year 1921 bear testimony to the existence of a national will in India that can stand firm in the stress of battle.

National revolutions are first brought about, not on the surface of the land, but in the depths of human hearts and minds. Non-co-operation completely changed Indian mentality in twelve months. It suddenly promoted the political capacity of all the classes of the nation. It wafted the message of liberty and patriotism to every single individual of this continent. It altered entirely the course of life for thousands of people. So completely did it eradicate fear of punishments and pains in the cause of liberty that imprisonment has become a sport and formidable law courts, theatres of public entertainment. In short, there is not a single avenue in the struggle for liberty that it has not laid open to us. If all these are events of yesterday's happening what more is needed to demonstrate that the programme is wise, practical and unerringly effective. The Non-co-operation movement never claimed to repeat the traditional miracles of old. It humbly held that if the country acted up to it, it could without the use of violence or weapons acquire such strength as would prove irresistible to the bureaucratic power. Do not all these results then constitute a conclusive proof of success?

### THE FIRST BATTLE.

If I am asked how far our endeavours have succeeded in open conflict I should like to review the events of December 1921 when the bureaucratic

powers had cleared for us the way to defensive Civil Disobedience by the enforcement of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. This was our real encounter. I want to place upon record this fact of history that the contest commenced on the 2nd of December and two weeks had not quite elapsed when signs of the defeat of bureaucratic domination were already visible and our opponents had perforce to acknowledge the strength of our movement. There was nothing left for the bureaucracy but to consent to a postponement of hostilities or to peace. Non-co-operation was, therefore, then sufficiently advanced as to deal with the opposition as with an equal adversary—in a position to treat on terms stipulating that the question of defeat for either side be waived, that both should temporarily suspend their activities, that the Government should withdraw the Criminal Law Amendment Act and release the prisoners, that the Congress should abandon the boycott of the Prince's visit and that a Round Table Conference be summoned later to deliberate over the demands the country. On the 21st of December, the Viceroy, in replying to a Deputation at Calcutta, appealed for the coming together of a Round Table Conference in such a tone as spokesmen for the bureaucracy have never formerly employed. He expressed his earnest desire to secure by any means possible either a truce or peace. I have mentioned this incident not because I consider it a great triumph of our cause, for our aims are high and, in keeping with them, the standard of our success is also high. It is not a mighty achievement for us that a desire for unconditional peace arose in the other camp. I believe it to be merely a preliminary success. It has shown that our course of action is effective and unerring, and that our methods are capable of changing an overbearing and hostile attitude in the Government into one of compliance and concession.

### A LULL

Gentlemen, in a perusal of the history of national struggles we always encounter records of a few mistakes, side by side with many remarkable achievements. Under circumstances of conflict mistakes are as it were, almost inevitable. I believe that the decision at Bardoli was, so far as our struggle is concerned, such a mistake. We cannot, of course, help regretting it but we feel that it was bound to happen. We could not avoid it. As a matter of fact, the first decisive stage of our struggle came to an end with the Bardoli decision. Since then we have paused in the struggle so that the war continues but there is a period of inactivity before the actual contest.

### THE COUNCILS CONTROVERSY

Gentlemen, since I was released from gaol last January I have felt that my first duty was to remove the present division of opinion. As it was necessary for the purpose to withhold from espousing any side by the expression of my personal views, I have not yet had an opportunity of putting forward my views as to the actual controversy. Today is the first time that I declare myself. I have personal friends in both the parties which the controversy has created and I have as much respect for their abilities and services as every Indian citizen must have. This, however, does not deter me from clearly expressing my own line of thought. For, if I refrained from doing so, I would not only be lacking in a sense of duty but would be guilty of a betrayal of the confidence that you have reposed in me.



The first thing I would like to mention about this controversy is that I believe far too much importance has been ascribed to it by both the parties to the dispute. I venture to affirm that the cause of our present difficulties lies in this mistake.

Obviously, whenever there is a difference of opinion, we should pause to consider if it is a difference of principle or of details.

Does it strike at the root, or at a branch only? If it is a difference of principle, it is our duty to hold to our opinions with the utmost steadfastness and determination. There is then no scope for compromise or for smoothing differences over. The question of the majority or minority of opinions is irrelevant. Even the question of discipline cannot affect it. If, on the contrary, we differ as to details the position is completely altered. Of course, we have no reason in this case to change our opinions but we need not be so very rigid in their application as to admit of no elasticity. If necessary, we may even ignore our own opinions. If necessary we can sacrifice small things to expediency. Unity in the party, obedience to the will of the majority and orderliness of discipline must be maintained at all costs. Resolution and perseverance are qualities of the first order for people, but only when they are expended in the proper place and in wise proportion.

I can unhesitatingly assert that this difference was really not one of principle for the Non-co-operation movement. What is Non-co-operation considered as a Principle? I am sure no-one would urge in reply that it is those items of the programme where educational institutions, law courts and Councils are specifically mentioned. It is certainly not synonymous with the boycott of government institutions or with dissuading voters from going to the polls. It is something higher than all these things. But we know that this difference was not whether or no we should co-operate with the Councils but whether we should adopt the same attitude towards the second elections to the Councils as we had done at the first or introduce any changes into our attitude. I fail to comprehend why strict adherence to the creed of Non-co-operation should not accommodate several schools of thought. It is a case of a difference in opinions as to one of the items of the programme. I should like to ask why even the question of the entire change of the Non-co-operation programme should be considered a question of principle? The basis of Non-co-operation is that we cannot co-operate with the bureaucratic administration. When a person admits this, he is a non-co-operator. Of course whatever we decide will be binding upon the people. But it is in no way a principle; it is a detail, not the goal but the means. If there is a difference of opinion in this matter the same significance cannot be attached to it as to a difference in principle.

Freedom is our goal and non-violence and Non-co-operation are our principles. For the attainment of our goal we have adopted a programme every one of whose items is a means to the end. We cannot change the creed or renounce the principle but we can change our tactics any moment at will. If we refuse to introduce such changes, it means that we refuse to fight.

But it is to be greatly regretted that this difference has acquired for the parties concerned the significance of a difference in principle. Such energy has been expended upon the question as though the very life of the national struggle hung upon it. On the one side, it has been affirmed that it is a difference of principle. If the principle of Non-co-operation were really so narrow I would



respectfully say that Non-co-operation is impracticable. On the other hand, emphasis has been laid upon the fact that the divergences have led to a division in the united strength of the Congress. But, if such minor differences warrant division and the formation of parties in the body politic of the Congress, I will have to admit regretfully that no organization in the world can exist under such circumstances. However, I do not agree with the importance given to the matter under discussion. This question was assuredly not one for which we should have risked all our union, our enthusiasm and all that we had hitherto acquired. I can confidently say that—whatever may be the decision of the Gaya Congress about the boycott or otherwise of the Councils—if we had remained united, none of our present difficulties which have been responsible for frittering away the valuable year 1923 could have survived. What is the real cause of the breach in Hindu-Muslim unity ? I say it is merely this difference in your midst and the lack of employment and work before the country consequent upon it. When the people had no longer the task on which they had set their hearts, it was inevitable that internecine disputes should arise. When you are expending so great an amount of energy on giving the programme a certain shape, you might as well consider for a moment that the real secret of success lies not merely in the quality of the weapons and the highroads chosen, but in the actual strength of the army itself. As to what the weapons should be is a question of minor importance. The real question is what the soldiers should be like. What should their moral fibre be ? So far as the weapons are concerned it is enough to ensure that they are effective for their intended purpose. If they are not of superlative quality, it matters little. It is unity and firmness in our forces that is an essential requisite. An army, firmly united, can win a battle even with inferior weapons. But the very best of weapons cannot win success for a scattered and disheartened force. For the last year we have been quarrelling about the nature of our weapons, not troubling to notice the state of the army. If the army is once scattered how will the best of weapons help it ? Admit for a moment that the boycott of the Councils is the most important task before us or that entire victory consists in capturing the Councils. But when you have no united strength, when your organization has become chaotic, the discipline of the national centres destroyed and above all Hindu-Muslim unity fractured, how will you successfully boycott the Councils—how capture their seats ?

### EXCESSES

Gentlemen, what we must needs cherish with care are not minor details but actual principles. It will therefore, be folly to be so carried away by zeal for a minor matter that the danger may arise of the birth of new principles, and this may later on create for us great difficulties. When this difference brought about a division and took the shape of partisan quarrels and dissension it was inevitable that there should be an inclination to excesses. It is our duty, however, to divorce our brains and hearts rigorously from division and never to preach blind obedience though we should be strong in discipline. By blind obedience, I mean a state of mind in which a person exceeds the limits of moderation in following a great man. Instead of using his own mental faculties, the word of one person becomes the criterion of right and wrong, truth and untruth for him. Such blind obedience has been the greatest obstacle in the way of human progress and development both in the departments of religion and science. We should never import this mentality into our politics.

By discipline, on the other hand, is meant obedience such as the soldier owes to his commander. Just as blind obedience is a stumbling block in the way of all success and progress, discipline is the requisite condition for all corporate action. It is possible that the commander may issue wrong orders but the soldier must obey them even though he differs from his leader about their suitability. Even if the commander issues wrong commands we should prefer to be killed like the English regiment at Sebastopol for whom Tennyson has written the famous elegy, rather than disobey. To suffer the consequences of wrong leadership is better than the defection of an entire army on the field of battle.

Today, the Indian National Congress is the only governing body for us. We are in a state of war. We should not, of course, obey blindly either the mandate of the Congress or the views of our greatest leaders but we should not disturb discipline either. I regret to say the party opposed to all changes must beware lest we should inadvertently be betrayed into blind obedience or total inertia and the party insisting on the introduction of changes have failed to realise that we must not ruin the discipline of our organization for the sake of a minor difference.

### OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME

Gentlemen, permit me now to place before you my opinion concerning our present condition and our future method of work. I believe that the true guidance for us is that of Mahatma Gandhi, and it is under that guidance alone that India can ever gain salvation and freedom. There are three courses before India today—contentment with the present situation, armed revolution and the Non-co-operation movement. We cannot remain satisfied with our present lot; we cannot bring about an armed revolution and do not desire it. The third course, Non-co-operation, alone remains open to us. As to the programme of Non-co-operation, there is no reason why we should make any change in its principles. It must, no doubt, be admitted that the first conflict is over. The struggle has, for the moment, been suspended. But we must prepare for its resumption. Civil disobedience, and civil disobedience alone, can be the decisive factor. Even if we do not resort to mass civil disobedience for the time being, we have full faith in the power of defensive civil obedience.

Defensive civil disobedience requires conditions, some of which depend on our own preparedness, while others depend on the behaviour of the bureaucratic authorities. When the bureaucracy behaves in a particular way, the conditions we require are present,—as for instance when it tries to stop our activities with severity and force and strains and misinterprets the law as it has often done in the past.

No doubt this is a condition the fulfilment of which is not in our power, nonetheless we can be confident that the natural tendencies of the moment are working in our favour. Not only do we know that we are in the right path, we are also sure that the adversary facing us is altogether in the wrong, and that the inevitable outcome of the struggle is that he should meet with defeat. The struggle today is not between the individuals forming the bureaucracy and the intellect of India, but between a wrong system and righteous demands. As a necessary consequence, on the one hand, mistakes will be piled on mistakes, and on the other, the party of the nation will acquire new sources of strength. We should be confident that if we continue our preparations, an atmosphere will soon be created in which it will be possible for us to begin our second decisive

battle, and the battle will offer an attraction to our non-violent soldiers, and we will then see that the beds of those now in hospital are empty and the field of battle filled with men

## COUNCILS

But how are we to utilise the time before us in order to create a proper atmosphere for renewing the struggle at the earliest moment and at the same time find full scope for our activities? Will it be better for us to boycott the forthcoming elections, or should we, wherever we can secure a majority, go to the Councils, and make them a temporary sphere of our non-co-operation activities

After considering all aspects of the question, I have come to the conclusion that under the present circumstances it is useless for us to boycott the Councils, and remain aloof. As on the occasion of the previous election a boycott was necessary for us, so under the present circumstances it is to our advantage to occupy as many seats as possible. We should try to enter the Councils and Assemblies and should follow such a policy that those Councils and Assemblies may become a sphere of our efforts. In my humble opinion our future programme should be that on the one hand a section of us enters the Councils while on the other hand our activities outside the Councils continue. The All-India Congress Committee should supervise both these activities so that the work remains under the direction of a single organisation. It ought to be decided once for all that entering the Councils means following a definite and fixed programme decided upon by the Congress. This programme should clearly specify all those conditions which may serve to prevent our activities being contaminated by co-operation. Since our object is not to co-operate, it is clear that our activities there cannot be continued for long. It must also be made clear that no responsible post can be accepted in the Councils even for a very short time with any intention whatsoever.

Now it remains to be decided what ought to be our programme after entering these Councils. Many courses are possible and much depends on the trend of events and circumstances at the time. But this much is obvious that at some opportune moment the non-co-operating members will have to leave the Councils and resort to civil disobedience along with those workers who have not gone to the Councils. We adopt the policy of entering the Councils in order to make the Councils a sphere of our activities, and not to boycott them,—for this will be a better preparation for the ultimate struggle.

If we were fully convinced today that instead of being in a state of suspense we are prepared to offer civil disobedience, I for one would not for a moment advise you even to think of entering the Councils. That is why, though I was entirely disappointed at the success of the Gaya programme, yet as long as there was the slightest hope of its success my best efforts were to make a united effort to make it successful without thinking of entering the Councils. However, if we wish we can today proceed to draw up a programme of our activities after entering the Councils or if we prefer it we can postpone it for the annual session. The last will be the better alternative.

What should be our programme outside the Councils? This is the most important problem for us to consider and on this depends the utility of this new method of warfare. Regarding this I wish to place the following for your consideration.

1 On the constructive side of the programme the propaganda of Hindu-Muslim unity should begin anew I will in a moment draw your attention to the details of the question

2 The organisation of the labouring classes of the country, for we can do nothing in future while ignoring them

3 The political education of the masses by means of speeches and writings In our former activities we had to undertake the work of preparation, canvassing, and opposition at the same time We should not ignore this work while we are in our present state of suspense We should try to engrave the principle and aims of national unity, Non-co-operation, non-violence, and civil disobedience on the hearts of the masses They should follow us not on the grounds of religious belief, they should consider it their duty from sentiments of pure patriotism A mass of political literature should be prepared in different languages of India and distributed broadcast The workers and volunteers of the Congress Committees should tour through towns and villages to instruct the people and open temporary political schools everywhere A programme of work for three or six months should be drawn up for this work and in that time we will be able to instruct the people up to a certain definite standard If the government puts hindrances in our path it will be all the more useful to us It is quite possible that we may thus be able to attain our goal

#### THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

4 I wish to make it quite clear that there can be only one possible method of our entering the Councils the Congress should not only issue a mandate but also undertake direction But today if you decide against entering the Councils no single person or party, as I have already emphasised at length, should advance one step further I altogether deny that the question is of a character to justify our disobeying the National organisation in case of a difference of opinion If today you again decide against entering the Councils I would in that case think that a boycott of them is preferable to entering For the chief need is united effort The method adopted by us unanimously will be better than any which have been individually chosen, and for as long as no question of principles is involved we should not disobey our National organisation

Gentlemen, on the occasion of the Gaya Congress the Conference of Muslim Ulema decided that Musalmans should not stand for election to the Councils In fact, from the religious aspect of the question only, the principle of Non-co-operation was in view, and so far as its programme of work was concerned the Ulema were naturally opposed to all those methods from which the least danger to the principle could be apprehended Whether entering the Councils would be harmful or beneficial to the principles could only be decided by those who had gained some experience of these affairs But as at that moment there were differences of opinion even among such persons, the Ulema naturally preferred the safer course Opinions being divided, complete boycott appeared the safer alternative But I assure you that if today you arrive at a satisfactory decision there is no reason for any insistence on their part

#### HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

I have occupied so much of your time in describing the superstructure of our building, but the condition of the foundations of our efforts—Hindu-Muslim unity—remains to be considered This is the foundation of our structure without which not only the freedom of India but all those factors necessary for the

life and progress of the country will remain a dream. Not only is our national freedom impossible without it, we cannot create without it primary principles of humanity within ourselves. If today an angel descending from the clouds were to declare from the top of the Minar of Delhi "You will obtain Swaraj within twenty-four hours if you relinquish Hindu-Muslim unity," I would prefer to sacrifice Swaraj rather than Hindu-Muslim unity, for delay in the attainment of Swaraj will be a loss to India alone but if our unity disappears it will be a loss to the whole world of humanity.

### THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY

No one with a single particle of love and affection for India can view her present condition unmoved and callous. Four years ago we made the grandest proclamation of our national honour and self-respect. We asked the world to wait for our freedom. But just when the world was turning its ear to hear the tale of freedom we have prepared a tale of slavish shamelessness and mad riots. Instead of Swaraj and the Khilafat the noise of the *Shudhi* movement and its opponents, are heard on every side. "Save the Hindus from the Mohammedans" is said on the one hand and "Save Islam from the Hindus" on the other. When the cry for the protection of Hindus and Musalmans rises so high it is obvious that our demand for the protection of a united India cannot be entertained. On one side the platform and the press invite the mad religious bigotry of the people and on the other side a duped and ignorant public is shedding its blood in the streets of Hindustan. There have been serious troubles at Ajmere, Palwal, Saharanpore, Agra, and Meerut. Who can say to what unfortunate consequences these troubles will lead?

Gentlemen, I wish to tell all those persons who are busy in inciting these feelings that this state of affairs is intolerable. I will even go a step further and tell them that we are treading the path of freedom and they should not impede our progress. They must not put hindrances in our way and if they do so it will be our duty to clear the path of all obstacles. I beg to lay before all of you who have come here from every corner of the country and who represent the intellect and the voice of India that it does not matter in the least whether you decide that the Non-co-operators should or should not go to the Councils, but, for God's sake, decide here and now whether India is to protect the maimed hopes of her freedom and emancipation, or whether she is to bury them in the blood-stained soil of Saharanpore and Agra. Today you should announce your clear decisions on this point and devote all your energies to it. If you allow such things for a day longer, be sure, that it will throw back your progress for years.

Gentlemen, Not long ago the Musalmans as a community took no part in the activities of the Congress. It was a common feeling among them that they were numerically inferior to the Hindus in India and were also very backward in education and wealth, and that if they participated in any national movement, they would be working to endanger their existence as a community. As a result of this feeling their activities were long confined to communal organisation while they held aloof from the national movement. But those of you who have been studying the changes in the corporate life of the Musalmans during the last twelve years will

doubtless recollect that the first voice raised in 1912 against this attitude was mine. I invited the attention of my co-religionists to the fact that by persisting in the policy of aloofness they were making their existence an obstacle to the liberty of the country and that they should trust their Hindu brothers, join the Congress, make the freedom of the country their goal, and abandon the policy of communal aloofness. At that time my message was not received well by my co-religionists and met with strong opposition. But soon the time arrived when Musalmans realised the truth. When I was interned at Ranchi in 1916 I used to hear that Musalmans were eagerly and in numbers entering the fold of the Congress.

Gentlemen, as in 1912 I raised my voice against the conduct of my co-religionists and fear of their opposition did not prevent me off from declaring the truth, so now I deem it my duty to raise my voice against those of our brothers who are raising the standard of a Hindu Sanghatan.

I am surprised to find that the mental condition of the Muslim political circles of those days is found in these persons now. But the Musalmans were prompted by the fear that they were numerically inferior, whereas this movement is exciting the hearts of those who are four times more numerous than the Musalmans. I unhesitatingly declare that today India wants neither a Hindu nor a Muslim Sanghatan. We require one and one, Sanghatan alone—that is the Indian National Congress.

Some of the responsible leaders of the Shudhi movement assert that it is not opposed to Hindu-Muslim unity because after preaching sermons of opposition and strife they invariably conclude with a message of cordiality and love. But I would say to these gentlemen that they have already led us along the wrong path, and they should not now invite us to deny human nature. The Lord Christ exhorted the people of the world to forgive their enemies. But the world has not been able to forgive even its friends to the present day. Do you imagine that after exciting passions of jealousy and revenge, you can maintain cordiality and love among the same people?

In like manner I must say of the Shudhi Movement that though we may separate in theory our united efforts for political salvation and our communal and religious quarrels no such dividing line between their activities can be drawn in practice. We want a united nation and we know that if on one side the cries of "Mlech" and on the other those of "Kafir" are permitted to be raised then it will be impossible to create that tolerant spirit without which the existence of unity will be very seriously jeopardised. Gentlemen, I appeal to all the parties in the country that they should once and for all decide the fate of India. If they want their country to be free and attain salvation, they must postpone all other activities for her sake. No matter how dear these activities be to them there is no other alternative.

I do not deny that every community in India has numerous duties of internal organisation and reforms before it, and it is necessary that every community should make efforts to remove its own peculiar defects and frailties. Nonetheless, I absolutely deny that under these conditions any movement which draws its motive power from internecine warfare and communal strife can be legitimate. The same sorts of arguments are repeated. The same kinds of reasons are put forwards.

I do not wish to go into the details of the question. I refuse to acknowledge the validity of the arguments advanced in defence of communal or sectional movements. "In such and such a year", it is said "there was a disturbance in which one of the communities suffered a greater injury than the other. It is therefore necessary that it should organise a Sanghatan against the other community."



Now if we recognise the validity of such arguments for a single moment, it will be incumbent on every community of Hindustan to draw up a list of wrongs that it has suffered and organize its Sanghatan. In Bombay alone during the last twenty years many riots between the two Muslim sects have taken place in which one sect has had the satisfaction of killing and plundering the other. I must however frankly and openly declare that after the commencement of the new era of Hindu-Muslim unity, the Multan riot and the great injuries inflicted on the Hindus is an unfortunate catastrophe which should give pain to every Muslim heart. But in a country like India—a country inhabited by millions of people just entering upon a new phase of their existence, misdirected religious prejudices and untimely religious enthusiasms, are easily excited and such disturbances cannot completely be avoided. A disturbance now and then, is quite possible. Its remedy lies in the refusal of the other section of the community to view the matter in a sectarian spirit, they should blame the party that has been guilty of excess and sympathise with the party that has been wronged. You do not remedy the disease by exaggerating a local affair into a national and communal grievance, for this unites the opposition of the other community and starts a war that can never end. To-day from this platform, the cradle of united Indian nationalism and in the name of their common motherland, I appeal both to the Hindus and the Musalmans not to trample so cruelly upon national aspirations and hopes. Without further discussion as to what has happened we should at once stop all activities connected with the Shudhi movement. If the people cannot unite to stop them they should at least postpone them, if they did so they would be rendering the greatest service not only to their country, but to the whole of mankind.

### THE NATIONAL PACT OF INDIA

Gentlemen, let me remind you in this connection that we should prepare without any further delay a national pact which will not only elucidate and define our national goal but will also decide the future relations of the various communities in the country and close the gate to future trouble. India is a wonderful land. It is quite possible that the freedom of three hundred millions of people will be delayed because a procession passed by a mosque singing and beating drums—or the branches of a tree on the high road were lopped. When such is the nature of the country's sufferings we should not delay in deciding these matters once and for all time. I hope that you will consider these matters during your deliberations. It would be advisable to form a committee of select persons and to prepare a draft scheme before the next session.

### CONCLUSION

Gentlemen, Like the historic days of other Nations the consequences of this remarkable day may be of opposite kinds. To-day we can achieve the greatest possible success, but the greatest possible failure may fall to our lot. Our determination, our courage, and our patriotism are under a very great trial. Come, let us succeed in our task by devoting ourselves to the building up of our common destiny!

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